

American Coot (*Fulica americana*)

(includes 2 subspecies; 1 within plan area)

Conservation Concern Category:

Low Concern

Population Trend (PT)

F. americana americana--Stable (Delany and Scott 2002; Sauer et al. 2001)

"few now appear in the e US where they were abundant before extensive wetland drainage occurred...estimated breeding season numbers in the prairie parkland region have increased in the last 3 decades...this apparent increase may be partly explained by a tendency for surveyors to count coots more accurately in recent years...numbers increased after 1955 and decreased after the mid-1970s, and these trends mostly reflect the patterns of abundance in the Mississippi flyway...it may have declined recently in the Panama Canal area...formerly common in Honduras and El Salvador..." (Taylor 1998)

"significant decline in both abundance and distribution since early 20th century especially in e NA...formerly one of the most abundant waterfowl in NA...underwent major population decline in late 19th century...has apparently expanded its breeding range westward however, e.g. large increase in numbers breeding in southern interior of BC since 1968 and into e-central AK...population has stabilized during last 3 decades...BBS data for US and Canada increased slightly (1.2%/yr 1966-1999), but not significantly..." (Brisbin et al. 2002)

"Since 1970's, declines in South Carolina and Georgia of wintering coots from 3,000 to 5,000 to 0 to a few hundred." (L. Brisbin pers comm.)

Combined waterfowl breeding population survey data for survey regions within Canada and the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region indicate population estimates for 2005 (1,376t), 2004 (1,634t), and the 10-year mean (2,052t) represent 3%, 23%, and 54% increases respectively compared to the long-term mean, 1958-2005 (1,332t) (USFWS and CWS 2005).

BBS data for Canada slight non-significant increase in the population index (0.6%/yr, 1968-2002) (Downes et al. 2003). Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program, non-significant decrease in annual population index (-2.1%/yr, 1995-2004)(Archer and Timmermans 2004). Great Lakes region supports small component of continental breeding population (S. Timmermans, pers. comm.)

PT FACTOR SCORE=2

Population Size (PS)

F. americana americana-->6,000,000 total individuals (Delany and Scott 2002: Denver workshop extrapolated from BBS pairs))

"1.5-2 million birds in the Canadian prairies and > 1 million in the e Dakotas...US midwinter indices over the last 40 yr range from 1-3 million birds..." (Taylor 1998)

"pair densities: 32.6/km² (wet years Saskatchewan), 0.10/km² (drought), over 1952-1977 ranged from <0.5 to 17.3 pairs/km², over 1965-1969 ranged from 73.8 to 180.5 pairs/km² (North Dakota), 1.5 nests/ha (Manitoba potholes)...major breeding strata of US and Canada estimated at 3,000,000 breeding individuals...midwinter waterfowl surveys for US and Mexico which underestimate numbers by at least 1.6, indicate 2.5-3.0 million wintering coots..." (Brisbin et al. 2002)

PS FACTOR SCORE=1

Threats to Breeding Populations (TB)

"losses have occurred due to extensive wetland drainage... wetland loss has reduced the potential breeding population in regions such as Iowa and Minnesota..." (Taylor 1998)

"wetland restoration and creation offset some habitat losses..." (J. Hansen, pers.comm)

"densities fluctuate in response to seasonal precipitation...elevated levels of selenium in eggs..." (Brisbin et al. 2002)

"...a threat...is [lack] of reliable surveys" (J. Roberson pers comm.)

Main concentration of breeding population is associated with the Prairie Pothole region and surrounding region. Densities within core area have fluctuated in response to moisture conditions. Habitat preference is for more permanent wetlands, so less threatened by habitat loss due to agricultural draining in the PPR. This supports a lower TB score. (Ingram via Bazin, pers comm.)

TB FACTOR SCORE=2

Threats to Non-breeding Populations (TN)

“substantial decline in Pacific flyway wintering population possibly due to wetland destruction or drought in California... local populations of coots are extremely vulnerable to heavy shooting...” (Taylor 1998)

“Preliminary harvest estimates for the 2004-05 hunting season estimate a U.S. harvest on coots of 181,300 birds...very lightly harvested species [in the U. S.]” (S.Vaa, pers comm.)

“strong, unswerving flight of night-migrating coots may result in their death from striking high buildings... declines result from loss of wetlands and over hunting...currently probably under harvested...” (Brisbin et al. 2002)

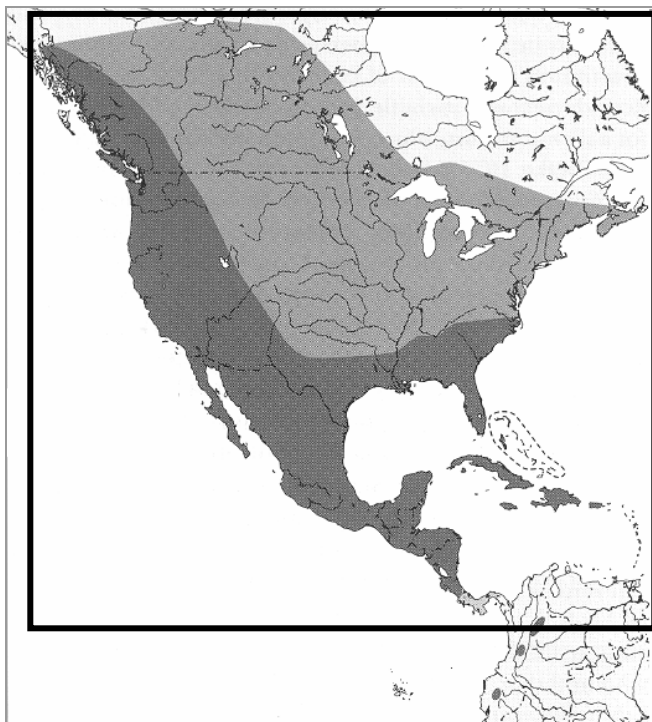
“major decline at Back Bay NWR (Virginia) of large wintering flock said to be related to decline in water quality...” (R. Russell, pers. comm.)

Potential threat to wintering coots is Avian Vacuolar Melanopathy (AVM); 70% of coots collected in US se show signs of disease—possibly a localized, regional effect (Marshbird Workshop 2005)

Concluded “no known (generalized) threats or information not available” (Marshbird Workshop 2005)

TN FACTOR SCORE=3

Global Range (Taylor 1998; inset=plan area range)



Breeding Distribution (BD)

F. americana americana—SE Alaska E to Nova Scotia, S to Caribbean, Costa Rica (Delany and Scott 2002)

7,717,600 km² (plan area distribution; estimated from range maps)

BD FACTOR SCORE=2

Non-breeding Distribution (ND)

F. americana Americana—W & S North America, Central America, Hawaii (Delany and Scott 2002)

7,783, 200 km² (plan area distribution; estimated from range maps)

ND FACTOR SCORE=3

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